and 0.27% in US dollar terms. The growth rate of imports during the first nine months of financial year 2001 -2002 was only 0.31% in Dollar terms and 4.55% in Rs. terms, compared to the same period for the previous year. The import data for 714 items, QRs on which were removed on 31.03.2000, for the year 2000-2001, indicates a growth in import of these items by less than 6%. Similarly, the import of 300 sensitive items, which is being monitored by a Standing Group of Secretaries, has also not indicated any surge in imports in the first nine months of financial year 2001-2002. The overall picture that emerges is thus one of normal trading activity in response to demand and supply factors.

However imports are constantly being closely monitored and the Government is determined to ensure, through appropriate use of tariff and other mechanisms, that imports do not cause any serious detriment or injury to the domestic farmers. Towards that end, import duties on a number of items, where increases in imports were noticed, have already been increased. In the budget for the year 2000-2001, import of duties on many of the agricultural items, were increased to provide further protection to domestic farmers, *e.g.* duty on rice was increased from 0% to upto 80%, on maize from 0% to 50%, on apples from 35% to 50%, on wheat from zero to 50%. Similarly, in the budget for the year 2001-2002, me custom duty on coconut, copra, tea and coffee was raised from 35% to 70%. The import duty on various refined edible oils excepting soyabean oil was raised upto 85%. Also, the import duty on crude palmolein oil was raised to 65% and on other crude edible oils excepting soyabean oil duty was raised upto 75%. In the budget for the year 2002-03, the custom duty on tea and coffee has been further raised from 70% to 100%, on natural rubber latex (code no. 4001.10) from 35% to 70%, on cloves, cardamom, pepper and poppy seeds from 35% to 70%, and on pulses from 5% to 10%.

QRs on export of onions

4254. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the decision to keep Quantitative Restrictions on export of onions has proved counter-productive with the apprehensions of China overtaking India as the key player in the world onion market within two years;

(b) whether onion crop has been facing a glut for three consecutive years now and if so, the rationale behind continuing QRs on onion exports; and

(c) whether Maharashtra and Karnataka are llikely to sit on 16 lakh odd tones of onions, the coming season, leaving farmers high and dry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY) : (a) Apprehensions of China overtaking India in onions export do not appear to be well founded since the quality of the onions produced by the two countries is not comparable.

(b) The data on production of onions over the past three years shows a fluctuating trend;

year	Qty. (Lakh MT)
1999-2002	49,00,000
2000-01	47,21,000 (estimated)
2001-02	54,84,000 (estimated)*

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Department of Agriculture and Cooperation.

*Source: NHRDC

The policy of export of onions is governed by the twin considerations of ensuring steady supply in the domestic market and or maximizing exports.

(c) The estimated production of onions in Maharashtra and Kamataka is around 16 lakh M. Tons of which the domestic consumption is around 50%. In addition, a substantial portion of the onion production of the two States is exported.

Agri-exports from Andhra Pradesh

4255. DR. DASARINARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the agricultural and Processed Food Products Exports Development Authority (APEDA) has assisted the exporters of Andhra Pradesh in trading and exporting agro products from the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof during the last three years, year-wise; and

(c) what measures APEDA has taken to boost agri-export from Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY) : (a) to (c) APEDA is assisting